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C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 000660

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TAGS: KCRM PGOV PREL PTER SOCI RO

SUBJECT: ROMANIA: G8 COUNTER-TERRORISM ACTION GROUP
DISCUSSES DIALOGUE WITH ISLAM, ORGANIZED CRIME, BORDER
SECURITY

REF: A. SECSTATE 58471

¶B. BUCHAREST 618

Classified By: CDA Mark Taplin for Reasons (b), (c) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. During the recent Russian Embassy-hosted G8 Counter-terrorism Action Group (CTAG) meeting (Ref A), participants agreed upon the importance of dialogue and exchange with moderate Muslims but acknowledged that their Embassies had not engaged in such efforts. Several participants discussed the nexus between organized crime networks and terrorism, with one diplomat decrying Romania's well-organized and politically connected "silent Mafia". End Summary.

Dialogue with Islam

¶2. (SBU) PolMilOff and PolOffs participated in the Russian Embassy-hosted G8 Counter-terrorism Action Group Meeting April 14. (Ref A) Representatives from the European Union (EU) Delegation of the European Commission, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan also attended but, perhaps because the Russian Embassy organized the meeting on Friday afternoon before (Western) Easter, representatives from the Embassies of Canada, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom did not attend the meeting.

¶3. (C/NF) Further to Ref A, PolOffs underscored the importance of encouraging interfaith dialogue and the importance of dialogue with moderate Muslims. We also provided a general overview of the Embassy's attempts to reach out to Romania's indigenous and immigrant Islamic communities. EU Counselor Onno Simons expressed appreciation for the Embassy's efforts to increase dialogue with Romania's Islamic communities, and candidly acknowledged that the EU Delegation in Romania had no outreach program aimed at Muslims. The other Western European participants offered similar views, posing questions to EmbOffs about Romania's diverse Islamic communities that belied the absence of even rudimentary knowledge of the subject. Although the Russians launched the discussion on Islam, apparently reading from a

prepared text, they did not participate substantively in this portion (or other aspects) of the discussion.

Romania's Silent Mafia?

¶4. (C) Responding, in part, to observations from EmbOffs regarding the nexus between organized crime networks and terrorism, EU Counselor Simons underscored that battling trafficking in persons (TIP), providing training and technical assistance to the Romanian border police and assisting Romania to battle financial crimes including money laundering are among the EU's top priorities in Romania. German Embassy PolCouns Hans-Peter Schneider stressed that Germany, like the U.S., strongly supports the Southeastern Europe Cooperative Initiative (SECI) and the Bucharest-based SECI Center. The other participants focused on bilateral and multilateral efforts to bolster border security.

¶5. (C/NF) Specifically addressing risks posed by organized crime, the EU Counselor proposed that the "Mafia" plays a pernicious and frequently sub rosa role in Romania. Noting the absence of press or police reports about gangland killings, he suggested that Romanian organized crime "may be so well organized they don't need to shoot each other." He conceded that the EU had no specific information to share on this point, opining that organized crime groups Romania "stay below the radar" and frequently collude with government officials. He observed that some sources had alleged that a "deal" existed between "certain Arab groups" and the Romanian government: "let us launder money (in Romania) and we won't attack" Romanian targets. Later in the dialogue, he stated that PKK "operations are financed by illegal operations in Romania." (Comment: During the meeting, Simons acknowledged that he lacked hard data for many of his assertions, suggesting in an aside "perhaps our U.S. colleagues have more

information." Simons is known in the Bucharest diplomatic community as one of the more skeptical voices regarding Romania's progress toward full EU membership. Indeed, at one point during the meeting, when he observed that Romania was headed toward EU accession, a Western European diplomat interrupted Simons, interjecting that Romania would accede "soon." End Comment.)

¶6. (C/NF) French Attaché for Internal Security Colonel Laurent Demolins observed that Romania's "good laws" are frequently not matched by "good enforcement." Other Western European participants endorsed this point, including the EU's Simons who rhetorically queried, "Is legislation being implemented? That's the key". Some participants noted that Romanian attempts to combat problems, such as smuggling, suffer from insufficient resources. Simons cited one case in which the EU had provided patrol boats to Romania but "lack of petrol" limited the number of actual patrols.

¶7. (C/NF) Demolins observed that Romanian border controls seem to adequately monitor the flow of citizens from Romania to the EU. However, he queried, "Do arms from Transnistria pass through Moldova into Romania?" The Russians remained silent. Demolins criticized the lack of effective cooperation among Romania's intelligence services, commenting that Romania may have "too many 'services' which concern themselves with intelligence and counter-terrorism."

¶8. (C/NF) Comment. Two of the Western European diplomats remarked wryly to us after the confab that the Russian hosts had read entirely from a script throughout the meeting and did not contribute to the dialogue beyond posing an occasional question to clarify a point made by another interlocutor. Embassy will continue efforts to engage in substantive dialogue with Romania's moderate Islamic community (Ref A). Indeed, Embassy Officers regularly meet with Muslim leaders; Romania's Mufti has agreed to participate in an International Visitors Program; and, several Muslim leaders attended an April PD-hosted seminar and workshop on Romania's draft Religion Law. (Ref B) Although other diplomatic missions in Bucharest from

countries with large Islamic populations, notably the Turkish Embassy, maintain a regular dialogue with Muslim leaders (Ref B), one positive outcome of the meeting may have been to sensitize Western European and Japanese participants to the importance of dialogue with moderate Muslims -- and the growing role of Islam in Romania. End Comment.

19. (U) AmEmbassy Bucharest's reporting telegrams are available on the Bucharest SIPRNet website:
www.state.sgov.gov/eur/Bucharest
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